



Bird Flu

How Can You Protect Yourself?

Lucky for us, so far the bad Asian bird flu virus has not spread to the United States. But, it is important that we are aware of the problem and know how to protect ourselves.

Bird flu, or the bad Asian highly pathogenic avian flu is a disease that causes birds and poultry including chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese, to get sick and die. The bad bird flu is caused by a virus called highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1. In rare cases, this virus has spread from birds to humans that were in direct contact with infected birds. Several deaths have been reported.



The bird flu can become a serious problem in humans if the virus changes so that it can spread from person to person.

Do not handle birds that look sick or are found dead. Instead, call the hotline below.

If you find a dead bird, call 1-877-968-2473 to report it. Do not try to handle sick or dead birds yourself. Also, tell your children not to touch sick or dead birds, but to let you know if they find one.

As always, If you catch a cold or flu, try to isolate yourself from other people and wash your hands often.

(Sources: USDA: Avian Influenza USDA Efforts and Response, December 2005; <http://www.usda.gov/birdflu/>; <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/flu.html>; <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>)

The good news is that all bird flu viruses will be killed by heat (cooking)!

There is no evidence of anyone getting sick from eating properly cooked eggs and poultry products that came from infected birds. But "proper cooking" is the key to food safety. This means that eggs should be cooked until the whites and yolks are firm. Do not eat raw eggs or use raw eggs in dishes that will not be cooked such as homemade dressings and sauces. Ground chicken or turkey should be cooked until the temperature reaches 165°F. Whole chicken or turkey needs to be cooked until the internal temperature reaches 180°F. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature.

Proper handling during food preparation is also important. When handling raw poultry, clean the surfaces and utensils that have come in contact with the raw poultry with soap and hot water. Sanitize knives and cutting boards by using a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water. Take care not let cooked food come in contact with raw poultry or eggs before consumption.

It is important that you wash your hands well before and after handling raw poultry and eggs. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling food.



Prepared by:
Chutima Ganthavorn, NFCS Advisor
Douglas Kunej, Poultry Farm Advisor